

# SAFETY TIPS FOR RECREATIONAL VEHICLES AND



## Recreational Vehicle and Towing Safety

There are three things you need to consider before starting out on your trip --- the **driver**, **vehicle**, and **trip plan**.

### **The Driver**

Drivers can be intimidated by towing or driving large vehicles, especially the first few trips. To assure that you are ready, here are a few tips. First, get acquainted with the vehicle. If it is an RV, review the owner's manual. Get familiar with the location of the controls and how they operate. If you are towing a trailer, read your vehicle owner's manual for restrictions or requirements. Your owner's manual may offer tips for weight and load distribution, turning radius, breaking and trailer tracking. If you still have questions, check with your dealer.

Driving RVs and towing large boats or trailers can cause a great deal of stress for the driver. Allow plenty of time for rest stops, especially on trips through heavy traffic, narrow winding roads, and hilly mountainous roads. You need to remain **alert** and **awake**. Don't push yourself beyond our limits.

### **The Vehicle**

There are several things you need to know about your vehicle before you plan a trip. Is it susceptible to strong wind? What is its gross vehicle weight rating (GVW)? What class of trailer hitch is it equipped with? Does it have enough power to pull itself and a trailer, especially in passing situations? What about trailer brakes? What is its stopping distance? Where are its blind spots? What is the turning radius by itself and with a trailer? What is the height and width clearance? How will a trailer track when turning corners? What will the total length be? What are the safety and security features of your unit? If you are planning on towing a trailer, practice backing up with your trailer before you take a trip. Backing up with a trailer may be one of the most dangerous maneuvers while driving the vehicle. It is a good rule to have someone watching you back up to warn you of problems. Remember, you cannot avoid what you cannot see. Remember to increase following distance when driving larger vehicles, when towing trailers, or in bad weather.

### **The Trip Plan**

It is very important to plan your route ahead of time. Consider the problem traffic situations that occur around large metropolitan areas. The time of day you travel through these areas is also very important. Some roads are restricted to certain size or class of vehicles. There may be different speed restrictions or special lanes you must utilize. Parking restrictions may be a problem. Park so you do not have to back up whenever possible. If you are carrying passengers, make sure they are seated and seat belted whenever the vehicle is in motion.

Connecticut state law requires all front-seat passengers and any children sixteen years-of-age and younger, regardless of seat location, to wear a seat belt restraint. There is a great risk to all passengers in RVs and vehicles that are towing trailers. Always make sure everyone wears his/her restraint.

Most states have laws pertaining to alcohol. In Connecticut, it is illegal for alcohol to be consumed while operating any vehicle on the highway. Driving while intoxicated is a serious charge. When operating large RVs or towing trailers, you should never use alcohol. If you take medication, you need to follow the safety recommendations that accompany the medicine. Never consume alcoholic beverages while you are taking medication.

No matter what the season, weather can be a problem. Strong wind, heavy rain or snow, fog, sun, extreme heat or cold can result in delays or even an accident. With this in mind, here are some safety tips:

- Always leave extra space between vehicles to allow for increased stopping distance.
- Have your vehicle inspected prior to long trips.
- Regularly check windshield wipers, tires, and all fluid levels.
- Be familiar with your travel route and emergency-stopping areas.
- If possible, travel with a cellular phone or CB radio.
- Do not let fuel levels drop below half a tank.

For traffic information with regard to weather conditions, call the National Weather Service at 1-508-822-0634.

### **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS WHILE TRAVELING:**

Fires can happen any time and anywhere. Extreme engine heat, hot wheel bearings, or electrical problems can result in a fast-spreading fire. Make sure you carry a charged fire extinguisher with you and check it regularly.

It is against the law in most states to carry loaded or dangerous weapons in a vehicle. In Connecticut, a weapon must be unloaded and broken down, or unloaded and secured in a locked container in a location that is not easily accessible. Because laws may vary from state to state, it is important for you to check with authorities in the areas in which you will be traveling to assure compliance with local laws.

Always remember to practice security when traveling. Never pick up hitchhikers. Always keep your valuables locked up and out of sight, especially when you leave your vehicle unattended. Pick your parking spots carefully and always make sure your doors and windows are locked. If you have window shades, make sure they are closed.

While traveling, you may be delayed by road construction or heavy traffic. Allow yourself extra time and remember, work zones usually have reduced speed limits. Fines double in work zones. Be alert for traffic-control signs and personnel. You may have to change lanes quickly or drive in lanes with narrow clearances. Leave extra following distance and always be prepared to stop. In Connecticut, for lane closures due to construction, call the Department of Transportation at 860-594-3447. If you are planning your route ahead of time, E-mail the DOT at [www.state.ct.us/dot](http://www.state.ct.us/dot) for construction activity and traffic emergencies.

If you should need to report an emergency, or require roadside assistance because of a breakdown, try to have the following information when calling for assistance: your location, including highway mile-post marker, direction of travel, and a town or landmark to help guide responding services. When traveling close to state borders, it is important to indicate the state where you are located as well. Unlike a 911 call from a regular phone line, cellular phones cannot give your exact location, so this information is of vital importance in life-threatening situations.

**In an emergency, dial 911 from any regular or cellular telephone.**

The Connecticut State Police is committed to safety and education for the motoring public on Connecticut's highways. For additional information on this and other free programs, please contact:

**CONNECTICUT STATE POLICE**  
**Department of Public Safety**  
**Public Information Office**  
**1111 Country Club Road**  
**P.O. Box 2794**  
**Middletown, CT 06457-9294**  
**(860) 685-8230**

